



Australian Bureau of Statistics

2050.0 - Australian Census Analytic Program: Counting the Homeless, 2001

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Hidden homelessness in Australia

On census night in 2001 the homeless population in Australia was 99,900 according to an academic report released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) today.

Counting the Homeless, 2001, by Associate Professor Chris Chamberlain from RMIT and David MacKenzie, a Senior Research Fellow from the Institute for Social Research at Swinburne University, analysed data from the 2001 Census and other sources. The report found that absolute homelessness, such as sleeping out and improvised shelter, accounted for only 14% of homelessness in Australia. Most homeless people were sheltered somewhere at night, about half staying temporarily with friends, acquaintances and relatives, but as a group homeless people were highly transient.

According to Chamberlain and Mackenzie, it is only after the homeless population is seen as anyone in need of safe and secure accommodation that the statistics start to paint a more complete picture of the Australian homeless population.

In 2001, more than half (54%) of the homeless population were adults over 24 years of age, with 10% under the age of 12 years and 36% young people between 12 and 24 years. Less than half (42%) of homeless people were female.

The majority of homeless people were single (58,116 people or 58%), while 19% were couples (18,840 people or 9,420 couples) and 23% were in homeless families (22,944 people or 6,745 families).

A similar study released in 1999 showed there were 105,304 homeless people on census night in 1996.

ABS Director of Census Products and Services, Michael Beahan, said this is the first in a series of research papers to be released under the ABS Australian Census Analytic Program.

“Academic analysis of the census count for homelessness provides an insight into the characteristics of the homeless population that is not available by looking at the raw data alone.”

Further details are in **Australian Census Analytic Program: Counting the Homeless** (cat. no. 2050.0).

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